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AUTHOR Lynch, Kathleen Kelley
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ABSTRACT

Data, accumulated over a 10-year period, support the development of a hypothesis about women's advancement in school administration. The hypothesis suggests that three critical factors affect women's advancement in educational administration: structural barriers, role compatibility, and organizational fit. Three primary data sources were utilized: (1) the researcher's personal experience; (2) the experiences of other women (21 women administrators at various levels of administration in 20 different school systems); and (3) literature related to educational administration and women's advancement within it. The hypothesis developed maintains that women can develop career strategy skills that can be used to maximize their career advancement. The awareness of critical factors can assist a female aspirant in analyzing her current situation and in deciding what career action she can take in pursuit of her goals. (21 references) (SI)

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GROUNDING RESEARCH IN EXPERIENCE: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS

Kathleen Kelley Lynch
Education Development Center
Newton, Massachusetts

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INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the development of an hypothesis about women's advancement in school administration based upon both theory and experience. The hypothesis is that women's advancement in educational administration is affected by three factors: structural barriers, compatibility between personal career orientation and the demands of the position, and fit within the organizational culture. By taking these into consideration, women can identify the career moves that represent the most promising sequence of positions in organizations most receptive to their advancement, at times in when they are most likely to excel in those positions. In developing this working hypothesis, I have drawn on my own experience as a woman administrator and on the experiences of the women administrators I observed closely over a period of ten years. This paper has a double purpose: to consider some of the factors which affect women's advancement in administration and to explore the process of developing a hypothesis in qualitative research. Both purposes are pursued by presenting a case study of the development of an hypothesis about the advancement of women in educational administration. The hypothesis was developed by grounding theory in the actual experiences of practicing women administrators. In drawing on experience and the literature to develop an hypothesis, it is my intention to set the stage for future research in which I test the hypothesis.

The Importance of This Paper

This paper is important for two reasons: the topic itself is important, and methodology employed is of interest to qualitative researchers.Exploring factors which affect women's advancement in educational administration is important because women have actually lost ground in school administration over the last sixty years (Bagenstos, 1987; Hansot and Tyack, 1981). The number of female elementary school principals dropped from a high of 55% in 1928 to a low of 18% in 1985. The percentage of female secondary school principals is even lower, and in 1985, only 2.7% of all superintendents were women (Bagenstos, 1987). During the same sixty year period, women consistently held three quarters of all teaching positions. Women are not represented in the management of education in numbers which represent their participation in the education workforce. Women are now trying to increase their ranks in school administration at a time of retrenchment rather than during a period of expansion (Hansot and Tyack, 1981). It is important to identify factors which will increase the opportunity for women to participate in management. While individual action alone will not bring about equity for aspiring women administrators, Hansot and Tyack (1981) point out that efforts at the organizational, societal, and individual levels are closely interconnected. This

paper focuses on individual experiences and individual advancement efforts.

A second reason for this paper's importance is methodological. Hypothesis development has historically been a somewhat enigmatic process (Becker, 1977). Becker (1977) maintains that while developing an hypothesis for qualitative research is a complex procedure, it can be explained so that others can carry it out. Miles and Huberman (1984) have stated that developing clarity around the "conceptual framework" of qualitative research bounds the collection and analysis of data in ways which allow for replication of the study. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) have defined reliability in qualitative research as the extent to which studies can be replicated.

The Issue of Bias

This hypothesis was developed by a practitioner in the field who drew directly on her own experiences the experiences and of others like her. This naturally raises questions of subjectivity and bias. Two factors mitigate the subjectivity and bias which unavoidably exist in this hypothesis. First, The result of the analysis of my personal experiences resulted in a hypothesis designed to be tested in the field, not a theoretical model for which I am claiming any kind of generalizability. Glaser and Strauss (1967) maintain that to generate an hypothesis, requires "only enough evidence to establish a suggestion", rather than to establish proof. They caution that waiting to generate an hypothesis until one has amassed enough evidence to establish proof may actually hinder the generation of new hypotheses (40-41). Miles and Huberman (1984) use the term "conceptual framework" rather than "working hypothesis". They maintain that conceptual frameworks can be "rudimentary or elaborate, theory-driven or commonsensical, descriptive or causal"(p.29). They further maintain that experience is a legitimate source for developing the conceptual framework.

Secondly, the literature reflects a growing awareness that data gathered and analyzed by an insider is valuable. Becker(1977) recommends personal experience as a source of working hypotheses. He believes that "the ability to make imaginative use of personal experience and the quality of one's personal experience will be important contributors to one's technical skill" (22-23). Peshkin(1988) sees carefully controlled subjectivity as the potential basis for a researcher's unique contribution. Hayano (1979) maintains that subjectivism and personal involvement can be assets which deepen the researcher's understanding. He sees the insider/outsider dimension as a continuum rather than a rigid dichotomy. Specifically regarding the study of women's issues, Biklen and Shakeshaft (1985) have emphasized the need to use a variety of research styles and qualitative methods which allow the researcher to focus on women's experience and their own reality. Tetreault (1986) has stated that "Feminist scholarship is rooted

in the personal and the specific; it builds from that to the general"(228).

The process described in this paper is similar to the approach of Christman (1988), who described how her own experiences guided the development of issues for investigation in her study of returning women administrators. She was surprised to find that the literature bore little resemblance to the issues her experience told her were relevant and provocative about the experience of returning women graduate students. She was also surprised that researchers had not embedded their work in the context of women's lives, which her own experience told her was critical. Christman drew on her personal experience as a returning woman graduate student to identify where extant theory did not match her experience. From the gaps she found between her own experience and theory, Christman developed a working hypothesis that guided her study of returning women graduate students. Like Christman, my own experience, analyzed within the context of relevant literature, generated a conceptual framework Which can be used by future researchers in the collection and analysis of data.

In this paper I will articulate the working hypothesis I developed while working and advancing in the field, trace the development of that hypothesis by describing my experiences in the field organized as data and juxtaposed with relevant research, and discuss the implications for field research designed to test the hypothesis. Thus, this paper is a case study of the development of a hypothesis for field study based on the experience of a practitioner working in the field.

DATA SOURCES

The hypothesis that women can advance their career advancement in educational administration developed from three primary data sources: (1) my own experience, (2)the experiences of other women I was able to observe over a period of ten years, and (3) the literature related to educational administration and women's advancement within it. The hypothesis developed through an application of the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967), in which I continually compared my experience with the experience of other women, and with theory. Each comparison led to a modified perception of my own experience, and interpretations of theory modified by personal experience.

Accumulating data is different from collecting data. To collect data suggests a conscious effort to acquire pieces of relevant information according to a deliberate design. Accumulating data implies that certain relevant pieces of information are acquired in the process of engaging in some other activity. When one is drawing on experience to develop an hypothesis, accumulated data are not unusual. The challenge in using data accumulated from experience is to move beyond the generalized impressions they may provide to the articulation of an hypothesis by sorting and

organizing the data logically. The experiential data were accumulated through traditional qualitative techniques: participant observation, interviews, conversations with knowledgeable observers.

Experiential Data.
The experiential data accumulated from female colleagues is summarized in Figure 1. This figure specifies the position and age of each woman administrator in the sample. Over a ten year period I accumulated data through my personal and professional association with 21 women at various levels of administration, in both line and staff positions, in 20 different school systems. The school systems in which these women worked varied from large urban systems to small suburban systems very wealthy and ethnically homogeneous systems to economically strained and ethnically mixed systems. The data were not consciously collected, but accumulated over time through personal and professional interactions, informal conversations about our jobs, our career aspirations, and our experiences in pursuing our careers. The frequency of interaction with individual female colleagues varied from daily over a one year period, to several times a month over a three year period, to several interactions a year over a 10 year period. For each informant, I was able to observe the individual in one or more aspects of her job over the time of the data accumulation. The data accumulation also included information from others who worked with these women and had acquired knowledge about them as a school administrators. Nearly every other woman included in the sample engaged in one or more attempts to advance to a position which she saw as more desirable. The sample of female administrators, then, was generally representative of women administrators. It included a mix of ages, positions, and types of school systems.

Personal Experience
My own experience includes a mix of elementary and secondary positions, and my career path seems, like that of many female administrators, to be a series of unlikely and loosely related positions. Prior to assuming my first administrative position, I had taught for eight years in elementary and secondary schools in suburban and urban settings which varied greatly in cultural and socioeconomic make-up. I was teaching in a large urban elementary school when I accepted an entry-level administrative position in a suburban vocational school.

As a program coordinator in a vocational school, I both taught and coordinated a program. Vocational schools, from students, to faculty, to administration, are very male-dominated environments. Less than 10% of the faculty, and about one third of the student body were female. In this entry-level administrative position, I led an all male team of teachers in the development and implementation of a special education vocational training program. This was a staff position with no line authority, and leadership

FIGURE 1: PROFILE OF INFORMANTS AND DATA ACCUMULATION METHODS

INFORMANT	POSITION	# OF YEARS IN ADMINISTRATION	AGE DURING DATA ACCUMULATION	DATA ACCUMULATION METHODS				DATA ACCUMULATED OVER A PERIOD OF...
				PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION	MULTIPLE INFORMATION CONVERSATION	SINGLE CONVERSATION OR INTERVIEWS	REPORTS OF KNOWLEDGABLE OTHERS	
KM	PRINCIPAL	20+	40-55	X	X		X	12 years
BL	DPPS	10-15	45-55	X	X		X	10 years
MA	PROGRAM COORDINATOR	1	30-35	X	X		X	1 year
AB	SPED ADMIN	20+	50-55	X	X		X	5 years
MT	PRINCIPAL	10-15	30-35	X	X		X	1.5 years
CM	PRINCIPAL SUPT.	1	35-40	X		X	X	1 year
GJ	PRINCIPAL	5	40-45	X	X		X	1 year
MS	ASST. SUPT.	5-15	35-40		X		X	2.5 years
TL	DPPS	5	40-45	X	X		X	2.5 years
LB	SPED ADMIN.	10+	40-45	X	X		X	3 years
PJ	DPPS	10+	45-50	X	X		X	3 years
AE	SUPT.	10+	50-55	X	X		X	2 years
SC	DPPS	3	35-40	X	X		X	3 years
OJ	SPED. ADMIN.	5	50-55	X	X		X	3 years
BM	ASST. SUPT.	5-10	35-40	X	X		X	2 years
NH	SPED. ADMIN.	3	40-45	X	X		X	2 years
SJ	SPED ADMIN.	10+	40-45	X	X		X	3 years
BB	SPED ADMIN.	10+	50-55	X	X		X	3 years
JS	SPED. ADMIN.	1	50-55	X		X	X	1 year

had to be achieved through the confidence I could inspire in the staff, through content area expertise, and through influence I could exert on the staff to follow my lead. This was a difficult, challenging, frustrating and rewarding experience. I felt somewhat unsure of myself initially, and felt a great deal of isolation and pressure as a woman. In retrospect, I believe this isolation and pressure were intensified by the lack of a female role model or mentor. By the time I left this position, however, I had gained the confidence of my staff, and felt confident in my ability to manage the program. Nevertheless, I felt I could be more successful in a position with line authority. In retrospect, I attribute naive perception of line positions to the naive belief that my frustrations with the staff position were due to a lack of formal authority. In the absence of a female role model or female mentor, I believed that a woman with line authority would not experience frustration in her job. The ability to get things done was, I believed, inherent in a position with line authority.

With the move from program coordinator to elementary principal in a small town, I achieved a line position. Since my teaching background included both elementary and secondary teaching in special education, the move from secondary program coordinator in a vocational school was less unusual that it may seem. As an elementary principal, I was not only the only elementary principal in the district, but the only woman administrator. There was only one elementary school in the system, and the superintendent had made it clear during the selection process that he was oriented toward the secondary level. He wanted an elementary principal who would take full control and responsibility for the elementary program. Furthermore, I would deal directly with the school committee, and would carry full responsibility with them for the elementary program.

The position offered high visibility, but little in the way of assistance or mentoring. Furthermore, it became evident early on that a woman administrator faced an additional challenge. I was following a very strong and popular male administrator who had moved on to a superintendency. The day after I had been hired, a school committee member told me, "You can't imagine how surprised we were to discover that our first choice was a woman!" They went on to describe the lengthy school committee debate about the potential problems involved in hiring a principal who might get pregnant. The school committee's agenda for the elementary principal was a full one: curriculum reform, personnel changes, revision of the staff evaluation process, improvements in student achievement.

At first, I felt somewhat uncomfortable with line authority, having developed the ability to accomplish goals using staff authority. The discomfort was exacerbated by the lack of a peer in the district, and I found it necessary to network with other elementary principals in the county, including several female principals. Although the school committee's agenda for the elementary school was successfully addressed during my tenure, I never felt entirely

comfortable with my line authority as an elementary principal. As I observed the fellow elementary principals, both male and female, with whom I met regularly,and we talked about our experiences, I found they experienced varying degrees of stress as line leaders. Some seemed very comfortable in their positions, and very matter-of-fact about aspects of the job that I found stressful. It seemed to me that there were variables I couldn't identify which differentiated our personal experiences. From the outside at least, there seemed to be less compatibility between role demands and my response to the role. Since I lacked either a female peer or a female mentor, I was unable to explore my personal compatibility with my role. It did feel like success had a heavy personal cost.

When a change in personal circumstances required a move to the Boston area, I decided to pursue central office positions. I was aware that the principalship was often not a high opportunity position for women seeking the superintendency. As a Director of Pupil Personnel Administration, I once again found myself as the only woman administrator in a small school system, and the youngest one as well. Four of the other five administrators were more than 25 years older than me. In this position, which included systemwide responsibility for special education, school health, psychology, guidance, Chapter I, school social work, and interagency linkages, I had line authority with regard to the professionals in my department, and staff authority with regard to building principals and professional staff outside of my department. My staff authority was prescribed by law and regulation for many aspects of my job. This position required strong, positive linkages with the community and included some volatile and conflict-laden program areas such as special education.

While in this position, I met every three weeks with a group of 13 other persons in the same or similar positions in surrounding communities who belonged to the same special education services collaborative. Half of the administrators in this group were women. The sizes of the school districts ranged from under 1000 students to more than 7000 students. In our meetings, we discussed topics which touched on all aspects our jobs, shared the demands and challenges of the position, and exchanged information about effective ways of meeting those challenges. Although there were some personnel changes, over a three year period, the group remained basically intact and provided an excellent source of data about women and men as administrators, about how the same position varied from one system to another, and about how systems varied in their approaches to the same problems.

Thus, my advancement proceeded rather rapidly, and over a very varied range of positions. Furthermore, the pattern of my advancement varied in some ways from patterns typically seen in women. I entered my first administrative position 10 years younger than women typically do, and while I began in the staff specialist position in which women are usually found, I quickly moved to line positions. Consistent with typical patterns of women's advancement,

I did continue in graduate training while holding a principalship, and did earn less than both my male predecessor and my male successor (Bagenstos, 1987). While I certainly did not come close to exhausting the administrative challenges of each administrative position I held, I did acquire a solid grasp of each position. When personal circumstances made a change of jobs necessary, I was able to combine my experience with my knowledge of theory to target new positions which would provide advancement. I approached the process of combining theory and experience by drawing from memory mental images of specific experiences which served as examples.

My last administrative position possessed all of the characteristics of a high opportunity position leading to a superintendency: high visibility in the central office, close proximity to the organizational leaders, multi-faceted responsibilities which linked with all of the schools and the community, and the active sponsorship of the superintendent. I was even given the opportunity to complete an internship with the superintendent. In spite of the opportunity provided to me, the closer I got to the superintendency, the less desireable the position seemed. During my internship, it became clear to me that, at least at that point in my career, I did not want to be a superintendent. I was having difficulty reconciling my understanding of the demands of the job with the vision I had of my own professional life. It was at that time that I decided to take a step back from school administration, and accepted a position with and educational research and development firm.

Literature on Theory and Research

Initially, the experiential data were stored in my memory, without any conscious effort to generate an hypothesis, although I did consciously compare my experiences with theory and research. This theoretical and research data accumulated as my formal administrative training proceeded. Through coursework and professional reading, I became familiar with findings of quantitative and qualitative research which resulted in theories about the nature and demands of educational administration, career socialization, organizational culture, women's personal and career development. These data were combined with data accumulated from the 21 women informants and my own experience.

The literature relevant to the development of the hypothesis is drawn from the literature on career socialization in school administration, within the framework of women's development. A fundamental concept in the development of the hypothesis is Gilligan's (1982) notion that women's personal development is different than that of men's, and women's experience in school administration cannot be accurately described by looking at it through the lens of male development (Shakeshaft, 1986). As Shakeshaft has pointed out , "When female behavior ran counter to the theory, it was the female rather than the theory who was found

inadequate" (159).

If the inadequacy lay with theory rather than with women, why do we observe such a discrepancy between the numbers of women in teaching, and the number of women advancing through the ranks of administration? Hansot and Tyack (1981) have identified three distinct theories that describe why women are not represented in administration in numbers proportional to their representation in education as a whole. According to the first approach, women are inherently unsuited to administrative work due to their early socialization, and need to be resocialized to perform more effectively in administrative roles. The second approach emphasizes the structural barriers of organizations which prevent women from advancing. Kanter's (1977) work falls into this approach. She maintains that woman behave in self-limiting ways because they are funneled into low-opportunity, dead end positions which allow them neither the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for advancement, nor the opportunity to demonstrate those skills which they do have. The third approach looks to male dominance in society at large as the barrier to women's advancement. The remedy, Hansot and Tyack believe, is in "fundamental social transformation as a prerequisite to meaningful change."(p.8)

Shakeshaft identifies remedies which are less global and generalized than Hansot and Tyack, but which still require primarily class action aimed at groups. While such large scale action is necessary and desirable, as an individual I felt the need to identify areas in which I could exercise some control over the development of my own career. I had experienced first hand the effects of structural barriers in school organizations, and I was able to identify specific instances in my own experience and those of other women in which those barriers were successfully negotiated. I compared the literature on women's advancement in administration with own experience and that of other women. The comparison of theory with experience indicates that structural barriers are important, but not insurmountable. I and other women I knew had been able to negotiate those barriers in some instances, and unsuccessful in negotiating them in others. If those of us who desired advancement in school administration could learn to identify those barriers in advance and strategize a way around, over, or through them, we could be more successful in achieving our career goals.

Ortiz's view of women's difficulty in aspiring to administrative positions builds on the structural barriers model. Ortiz views women's advancement as a problem of mobility, as they attempt to move through the barriers and filtering mechanisms which characterize each level of the hierarchy. She identifies three types of boundaries which must be crossed. Hierarchical boundaries separate the various levels in the school organization, and are usually differentiated by formal requirements such as degrees and certifications. Functional boundaries separate different

departments or divisions of the school system from one another, such as elementary and secondary principals. Finally, the inclusion boundaries differentiate individuals by their centrality to the organization. The inclusion boundaries may be intangible and require informal processes to cross them, and they are the most difficult boundaries to cross. Aspirants for administrative positions must move cross the boundaries from the periphery of the organization to its center, as well as moving from the bottom of the hierarchy to the top. In order to cross the boundaries, an aspirant must be socialized to the new position. Socialization may be formal or informal, and access to socialization experiences may vary.

Positions in the organization are differentiated as line or staff positions, and the differentiation can move an aspirant higher or lower in the organization, as well as change her position relative to the periphery and the core. The correct sequence of positions is important to the administrative aspirant, since the most common career paths for superintendent are teacher/principal/superintendent in smaller systems, and teacher/principal/central office administrator/superintendent in larger systems. Ortiz identifies four major barriers to women's advancement to the superintendency as: (1) the initial departure from teaching; (2) occupying positions like the elementary principalship which do not provide a high degree of upward mobility; (3)losing out to white males in the competition for line positions; and (4) taking the wrong career path, such as being a specialist rather than a principal.

Ortiz's model does make explicit the importance of the career path within a tightly structured hierarchy , and the importance of the unspoken rules which govern an administrative aspirant's movement from lower, more peripheral positions to higher, more central ones. I personally found Ortiz's model very practical and useful as I advanced in administration. Ortiz described for me a structure which I was not able to change, but which suggested to me the possibility of strategizing as a means of maximizing opportunity and charting a career path which would position me in progressively more favorable positions to move up and in the school administrative structure. Ortiz's model provided a structure for planning a series of career moves aimed at getting me to the position I identified as my goal. I set my career goal as the superintendency, and realized that I needed to acquire a line position , that I could not stay too long in an elementary principalship, and that a central office position had to offer high visibility, centrality, and line authority. Once I identified a career path, I could strategize my movement around or through the barriers. The idea of strategizing movement around as well as through barriers is consistent with the circuitous career paths which are a common experience among women (Shakeshaft, 1985).

As I began to strategized my advancement in administration, I found

a second theoretical construct useful, and complementary to Ortiz's structural barriers model. In a study of 25 women administrators, Marshall (1979) found that successful women administrators found ways to subvert or go around the usual socialization processes and find alternative socialization processes. Yet she points out that career socialization for school administrators is characterized by informality, ambiguity, and role conflict.

Marshall's notion of found that in a male-stereotyped role such as that of school administrator, woman must pass through a special socialization process. In doing so, they are experience conflict between traditional roles of women and the career demands and informal job criteria of administrative positions. She labelled this conflict "female career role stress". The specialized socialization process women must pass through has three definable stages: cultural definition, transition, and self-definition. She also found a relationship between the stage of career socialization, and the level of anxiety she experienced. Where the position a women held was appropriate to her level of career socialization, she operated with comfort; where there was a discrepancy between career socialization and position held, the woman experienced anxiety. Schwartz (1989) describes career conflict for management women as a continuum that runs from total dedication to job at one end and to a balance between career and family at the other. "What women discover is that the male corporate culture sees both extremes as unacceptable." (68) Marshall's description of 25 female administrators suggests that women in educational administration face the dilemma of a similar continuum of role conflict.

The idea of a compatibility between a woman's personal career orientation and the demands of her position holds a special significance for the woman advancing in administration . Women administrators are found more frequently in staff positions than in line positions, and those tend to be terminal positions for woman more frequently than for men (Marshall, 1979; Powell, 1980; Ortiz, 1982). Powell (1980) refers to these positions as "velvet ghettos" Women have been seen by the corporate hierarchy as more appropriate to such staff positions than to line positions, which are typically seen as "masculine". Powell (1980) includes among the stereotypical "masculine" traits such qualities as self-reliance, forcefulness, leadership ability, and high ambitions. Positions that are seen as managerial are still stereotyped as "masculine", and the ideal manager is still defined in masculine terms.

Powell (1988) conducted two rounds of research in 1976-77 and 1984-85 to test the hypothesis that the ideal manager is androgynous. Powell and his associates surveyed both male and female MBA students to discover in what terms they would describe the ideal manager. In both studies, more than 60% of both male and female MBA students described the ideal manager in masculine terms.

Among Powell's conclusions was the belief that as long as women remain in the minority in management circles, the male stereotype of management will endure, and the women who are in management positions will fell pressured to behave like men. Yet Powell also points out that for female managers to adopt male behaviors actually reinforces the male stereotype of the ideal manager. Powell's studies were of MBA students, and the educational administration environment may be somewhat different from the corporate environment, but the work of Marshall (1979), Ortiz (1981) and Edson (1988) suggest that it is similar. (1980).

Powell advocates that women strategize to assist them in overcoming barriers and accessing organizational power. He identifies three basic strategies. In the first, women emphasize the stereotypical feminine qualities (such as social sensitivity and empathy) which will help them gain socially directed functions such personnel or public relations. While this strategy may give women expert/informational power in the organization, the specialist positions to which this strategy provides access are often low-opportunity "dead-end" positions. Powell's second strategy is for women to adopt stereotypically masculine behaviors to achieve positions of line authority. While this strategy offers the opportunity to access positions with high visibility and high opportunity, the danger in suppressing feminine characteristics is that it reinforces the male stereotype in management. Powell also points out that female executives who use this strategy must pass through this stage and reintegrate their sexual identities with their career identities during the middle management period. The third strategy is for women to seek entry into informal networks or establish their own networks to increase the power they have beyond that which is associated with their formal positions. This strategy can-and should-be pursued simultaneously with one of the others. When this strategy is successful it gives women two sources of power:one formal one informal. However, the strategy involves risk in that even when women are able to enter previously all-male networks, men may covertly or overtly discourage their participation. POwell points out that none of these strategies will work equally well for every women. The choice of a strategy, he maintains, is largely determined by the culture of the organization.

Baltzell and Dentler (1983), in their study of principal selection processes, discovered that the notion of "fit" was a critical criterion which came into play in the selection of principals. Baltzell and Dentler found that each community had a deeply held idea of what a principal should be which was widely shared by central office administrators, parents, and other principals. Thus, a successful candidate had to "fit" this "cultural embodiment of community values and methods of operation"(p.35). They found that the "fit" criterion worked heavily against out-of-district candidates, minorities, and particularly women, who typically did

not embody deeply held ideas about what a leader should look or act like. In many instances, Baltzell and Dentler found that the vague "fit" criterion outweighed more specific criteria such as credentials and instructional leadership skills. The found that a successful candidate "fit" comfortably within a specific organizational context. They found, for example, that many of the women selected as principals in the ten randomly selected districts in their study were tall, 5'9'' or more. They found that through grooming and presentation, they were able to project strong images of assertiveness, confidence, and control which were integral to the district's image of a principal.

Louis (1985) identifies three basic components of workplace culture: 1) socially transmitted behavior patterns; 2)an identifiable and distinct group and 3)a relationship between the content and the group in which the group members demonstrate the behavior patterns in ways which differentiates it from other groups. It is the culture of the immediate workplace that impacts on the worker. Thus, workplace culture may vary from school to school, or from school to central office within the same school system. Schools may share cultural values as well. Thus, in one school there may be a high value placed on strict adherence to the teachers' contractual work day, while in another school, the value may be placed on being flexible about time in order to meet with students and parents in the late afternoon. For the woman seeking advancement in educational administration, the variation in cultures among school systems and schools could offer an opportunity in one cultural milieu which was absent in another. A female aspirant who does not "fit" into a particular school culture may meet the "fit" criterion in another.

Three Critical Factors.

Thus, there appear to be three critical factors in the advancement of women in administration: structural barriers, role compatibility, and organizational fit. Structural barriers as described by Ortiz (1982, Kanter 1977) and others comprise the formal and informal filtering system by which organizations train and test the suitability of an aspirant for a particular position. These barriers limit movement up the hierarchy and from the periphery of the organization to its core. Some of the socialization experiences which allow an aspirant to negotiate the barriers are (formal e.g. certification). However, many are informal (e.g. "old boy" networks). Researchers have demonstrated that women have less access to the informal experiences and socialization processes which facilitate movement through the structural barriers (Marshall, 1979; Ortiz, 1981; Shakeshaft, 1986; Powell, 1980, 1988). Yet some women apparently negotiate the barriers successfully.

A second factor is the degree of compatibility between the woman's career orientation and the demands of the position she holds. Marshall (1979) describes career orientation as it relates to

female administrative aspirants. This factor describes the degree to which a woman's perception of herself is constrained by cultural stereotypes of female behavior. To the degree that a woman self-perception is constrained by female stereotypes, she will be more comfortable in positions which traditionally have been seen as appropriate for women. Such positions include program coordinators, staff specialists, and elementary principals. To the degree that a woman has resolved the conflict between cultural norms of femininity and her perception of herself as an administrator and manager, and to the degree that she learns to manage the resulting role conflicts, she will be comfortable in the higher level administrative roles usually held by men, such as assistant superintendent, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, and Superintendent. As Marshall points out, the move from "cultural definition" to "self definition" requires a stressful transition period. Some women manage that transition effectively and experience success in roles traditionally held by men.

The third factor is organizational fit. This factor emerges naturally from the other two. It refers to the congruence between an individual in a particular role and the particular organization's idealized notion of the individual in that role. This factor acknowledges that organizational cultures vary, and that the variance colors the perceptions of those selecting from among applicants for a particular position. The effect of this factor is that the ideal principal in one school or school system may not be the same as in another school or school system.

It is hardly hypothetical that the successful applicant is the right person in the right position in the right organization. What is hypothetical is the idea that a woman administrative aspirant can increase her chances of being the right person at the right place at the right time by conscious and deliberate strategizing around the factors of structural barriers, role compatibility, and organizational fit. The hypothesis developed in this paper maintains that woman can develop career strategy skills which can be used to maximize their career advancement. An awareness of critical factors can assist a female aspirant in analyzing her current situation, and in deciding what career action she can take in pursuit of her career goals.

DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

The experiential data, when considered within the context of theory and research, suggests some interesting interpretations of women's experiences in school administration. While the data certainly do not lend themselves directly to the development of theory, they do support the articulation an hypothesis. Some examples, taken from the real experiences of the women in this sample, illustrate the point.

Several of the women administrators successfully advanced in the

school hierarchy during the data accumulation period. When I first met the superintendent in the sample, she was an assistant superintendent in the same system. She had come to that system three years before from a position as a collaborative director. One of the assistant superintendents was a principal when I first met her. One special education administrator moved from one system to a smaller system, where the same position held the rank of Assistant Superintendent, much closer to the core of the organization.

The sample of women administrators also includes several who left administration. A special education administrator with more than ten years of service was forced from her job when changes in the community resulted in new faces on the school committee. The school committee hired a new superintendent with a management style to which she did not adapt. Within a year, the new superintendent, with the support of the school committee, had redesigned her position, forcing her to reapply. She was not rehired. She filed two lawsuits in an effort to regain her position, neither of which was successful. The negative publicity and refusal of the system to give her a good recommendation has made it impossible for this woman to obtain another administrative position anywhere in the state, in spite of four years of efforts. The question raised by this paper is whether this woman could have identified changes in the value system of the organization under a new superintendent and school committee, and predicted her loss of organizational fit. If she had been able to predict this change, could she have strategized a move to another system with a higher possibility for success?

Another example is the program coordinator in the sample served in a newly designed position coordinating an adult education consortium of four school systems which was housed in a vocational school in which I worked. She and I were the only female administrators. Since I observed the program spoke daily with both her and the male administrators to whom she reported, I was able to observe her over the period of a year. I observed a competent woman experiencing frustration and failure because her management style did not fit the culture of the organization. The year began with great hope and enthusiasm, got progressively more hostile, and ended with the termination of her position. Could some specific training in the factors affecting women's advancement have aided this woman in recognizing the adverse response by the men with whom she worked to her personal style? Could she have strategized a way to perform her job in ways which fit better within the culture of the organization? Or, could she have identified key cultural indicators before accepting the job which would have led her to determine that this was not the best organization for her? The hypothesis presented in this paper suggests that she could.

Consider also the female high school department head with ten years of outstanding service who feels comfortable and confident in her

position and began two years ago to apply for principalships within the district, even though there are no female secondary principals or central office administrators Each time a position has come up, she has been interviewed, but a man with less experience or fewer credentials got the job. Each time, the superintendent assured her that she is "next in line" and will get a principalship as soon as an appropriate opening comes up. The "appropriate opening" never seems to come up. The hypothesis developed in this paper could guide the woman to conclude that the system will never find an "appropriate opening" because the cultural values of the system will never allow her to be perceived as "appropriate". A promising strategy would be to apply for positions in other systems, perhaps those which already have a female secondary principal.

Consider as well the female Director of Pupil Personnel Services in a high-powered suburban school system, who deferred motherhood until her late thirties, after a successful career in administration was well under way. When she returned from maternity leave, she found her job far more stressful than it had ever been in the past. She had difficulty balancing the demands of mother and administrator. In an attempt to balance the two roles, she often found herself short tempered both at home and in school, and frequently felt harried, unprepared, and too distracted to concentrate on any one task. She didn't want to let go of her job, but wondered what good it would do to help other people's children if her own child received inadequate parenting. The hypothesis suggests a lack of fit between the woman's career orientation and the demands of her role. In reality, this woman resolved the conflict by leaving her job. But the hypothesis suggested here offers her other alternatives. Certainly the role compatibility issue is relevant, and the woman may need to find personal supports for resolving the conflict she feels between her roles as mother and school administrator. The organizational fit dimension may provide strategic information as well. If this is a system in which the ideal administrator is defined in male terms, then the role compatibility issue may be resolved by changing school systems. This administrator may decide to look for a school system where she can job share, or place a crib in her office. The strategy of interrupting her career to concentrate on motherhood exists as well, but it becomes a career option, rather than a forced choice.

SUMMARY

This paper presents data, accumulated over a ten year period, which support the development of an hypothesis about women's advancement in school administration. The hypothesis arises from the experience of female administrators juxtaposed with theory. It needs to be tested in the field. The hypothesis suggests that three critical factors affect women's advancement in educational administration: structural barriers, role compatibility, and

organizational fit. The hypothesis further suggests that woman can develop the ability to strategize career moves to maximize their professional advancement. Further verification of this hypothesis requires research similar to the longitudinal study currently undertaken by Edson (1988). Although the working hypothesis was derived from theory, further inquiry is needed to explore whether real-life experiences of advancing woman administrators support the descriptive power of theory. An exploratory approach to the testing of this hypothesis will result in descriptions of women's strategic decisions as they pursue advancement in administration. There is a great deal of literature which documents the barriers which impede women's progress, and the kinds of societal restructuring and class action which must be undertaken if true change is to come about. Societal restructuring and class action are essential, but it is equally important that women know what variables which are within their ability to control as individuals affect their career advancement. When women possess the tools to analyze their career situations and strategize their career moves, they maximize the potential for achieving their goals.

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